

The Open Space and Trails Committee met on Thursday, March 7, 2019 at Seabrook City Hall, 1700 First Street, Seabrook, Texas to discuss and if appropriate, take action on the agenda items listed below.

THOSE PRESENT WERE:

Helen Burton	Chair
Sally Antrobus	Vice-Chair
John Coggeshall	Member
Monica Comeaux (Absent)	Member
Debra Harper	Member
David Popken (Absent)	Member
Heather Cable	Member
Kevin Padgett	Public Works Director
Stephanie Martinez	Executive Administrative Assistant

Chair Helen Burton called the meeting to order at 5:02 p.m.

1. PUBLIC COMMENTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

There were no comments or announcements.

2. NEW BUSINESS

2.1 Consider and take all appropriate action on a creation of a task force to review options to not sale Carothers Coastal Gardens.

Vice Chair Antrobus shared her concerns in creating a task force: The City needs to keep all options open and there are no park specialists or native plant specialists on the committee, council, or city staff. A task force is a preliminary idea. After speaking with the City Manager, Vice Chair Antrobus stated she has mentioned about getting a group of individuals who meet a few times, discuss, and give input on their specialties then bring the recommendation of the task force to Council. The task force could save the City from taking hasty action like selling Carothers and it provides great transparency for the voters. Vice Chair Antrobus gave a list of possible people who can be on the task force, such as: Mark Kramer – Armand Bayou Nature Center, Hillary Gibbs – Armand Bayou Nature Center, Thomas Scarsella – Armand Bayou Nature Center, Wendy Reistle – Native Plant Society, Rowena McDermid – Native Plant Society, George Kyame, Chris La Chance, H-GAC, Kevin Padgett, Diane Royal, Dori, Nancy Edmonson, Paul Chavez, and David Popken.

Kevin Padgett, Public Works Director, stated that City Council would like to have a special workshop meeting with the Committee at Carothers on March 26, 2019.

Committee members had several comments and questions, including the following:

- A good task force would be made up of individuals with different viewpoints to figure out what is best for the City.

- 39 • Ask the City Manager if Seabrook Economic Development Director, Paul Chavez can be
40 on the task force or get an EDC board member on the task force since EDC has the
41 money for Seabrook economic development.
- 42 • The thought has come up to have the bay side of Carothers more natural with paths going
43 through it. For example, at MD Anderson there is some acreage with a native plants
44 growing that has a mowed section next to the trail so that it is manicured and natural all at
45 the same time.
- 46 • The Mayor has asked if we can have a nature center at Carothers?
47 There are multiple nature centers around the City of Houston that range in all kinds of
48 different styles. Carothers could be turned into a nature center. Wildlife Park and
49 Robinson Park are models that the City can use to make Carothers wild. The parks are
50 wild because of not mowing as often which also brings down maintenance cost. We can
51 plant some native seeds and watch them flourish.
- 52 • An artist may want to lease the house for a studio. This generates revenue.
- 53 • What is the biggest cost at Carothers? Would the Events & Communications Specialist
54 still be needed?
55 Public Works Director, Kevin Padgett stated that yes, the Events & Communications
56 Specialist is still needed because she does tend to other matters besides events at
57 Carothers. From the Public Works stand point, it is the maintenance of the building and
58 the grounds. Public Works prepares for the events and cleans up after the events and
59 schedules the janitorial services to come out.
- 60 • How much are we going to save by not mowing or cleaning out the fountain?
61 Mr. Padgett stated he gave his numbers to the City Manager and so did the
62 Communications Department and that is how the annual cost was formulated.
- 63 • \$240,000.00 a year of staff time at Carothers has people baffled. That is \$20,000.00 a
64 month, which is 4 people being paid \$5,000.00 a month to tend to Carothers.
65 Mr. Padgett stated that there is more included in those cost then just salaries, such as:
66 equipment, mowers, etc.
- 67 • Is it because the park has more acreage or is it because of the plantings that take so much
68 more money and time?
69 Mr. Padgett stated that it would be easier if we could mow with a batwing mower at
70 Carothers. In other parks, where they can use the batwing mower, they can mow up to 15
71 feet at a time and be done within two hours. At Carothers, it takes almost the whole day
72 to mow with regular push mowers and properly manicure Carothers. Some weeks
73 Carothers has 3+ events so public works has to go out there more multiple times to make
74 sure landscaping is picture perfect for those renting the facility because that's what they
75 expect. City Staff is out there on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday's to make sure the facility
76 is up to par for the next renters, which includes overtime.
- 77 • Is the price to rent Carothers not compensating City staff for all the work being done?

Mr. Padgett stated that the price to rent the facility had to be reduced because it was not being rented out enough. The City has to compare Carothers rental rate to other facilities in the area to compete.

- Mr. Padgett stated that City staff wants to make good use of the property and facility because that is what the public bought it for.
- There are plenty of houses in the area that have been worked into the parks systems that the City can look into to gathering ideas.

Motion was made by Vice Chair Antrobus and seconded Member Cable

To address disproportionate staffing expenses at Carothers Gardens compared with other City parks, I move that a short term Carothers Task Force be convened to review usage options that will greatly reduce expenses for this park and increase use by Seabrook residents

MOTION CARRIED BY UNANIMOUS CONSENT

3. COMMITTEE BUSINESS

3.1 Update on recent and ongoing park activities and improvements from Committee members, and park reports from Committee Park Checks. (Committee)

- Baybrook Park has received the recycle bin.
- A Seabrook resident complained about a bench placed in a park that looks directly into his backyard. The Public Works Department has planted an oleander tree in front of the bench to block the view of the resident's backyard.

3.2 City Staff update.

- The parks have been prepped for the upcoming Lucky Trails Marathon. The recent rainfall has made preparations difficult with drainage and trail run-off.
- The Parks Crew found a pelican stuck in a storm drain in Miramar Park.
- Public Works is working on a Safe Path to School Grant that is due in April.

3.3 Discussion and approval on the Action Item Checklist.

- Volunteers: The Committee members submitted their volunteer hour to Chair Burton during the meeting to keep records current.
- Birding Events: No updated information at the time.
- Erosion at Pine Gully: Due to the recent rainfall, it is currently too wet to being the project.
- Mile Marker Trail Maps: The project is currently in the works. Member Coggeshall is review map design/layout.

- Pollinator Pathway: Vice Chair Antrobus is looking at the pollinator pathway as a Carothers Project. Other spots to start a pollinator pathway would be Baybrook Park and possibly Hester Park.
- Seabrook Prairie: the prairie needs to be mowed but the recent rainfall has brought that to a halt.
- Seed Library and Community Garden: Member Cable is meeting with Seabrook Library employees at the end of March to review the project.
- Tree Plantings: March 21, 2019 at 12pm, Gulf Winds with several volunteers will be out at Seabrook parks planting trees.
- Woodlands Regeneration: No updated information at the time.
- Irrigation System at Pine Gully & Baybrook: No updated information at the time.
- Deforestation: No updated information at the time.
- Interpretive Sign Covering Project: The Committee is looking for Scouts to take on this project.
- Specific Bird Feeder Removal: No updated information at the time.
- Lucky Trails Marathon: The Marathon is set to begin March 15-17, 2019. The Public Works staff has been busy preparing for the event.
- Trash Bash: Public Works is looking for volunteers. Member Coggeshall volunteered to be a bus chaperone.

3.4 Approve the minutes of the January 3, 2019 Open Space and Trails Committee meeting.

Motion was made by Member Harper and seconded by Member Coggeshall

To approve the minutes of the January 3, 2019 meeting

MOTION CARRIED BY UNANIMOUS CONSENT

3.5 Approve the minutes of the February 7, 2019 Open Space and Trails Committee meeting.

Vice Chair Antrobus stated that a sentence under 2.1 should be amended from "The majority of the event planners time spent at the property and the work is extensive, including bridal show attendance" to "A lot of the event planners time spent at the property and the work is extensive, including bridal show attendance."

Motion was made by Vice Chair Antrobus and seconded by Member Coggeshall

To approve minutes of the February 7, 2019 meeting with noted corrections

MOTION CARRIED BY UNANIMOUS CONSENT

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144 **3.6 Establish future meeting dates and agenda items.**

145 The next meeting date will be April 4, 2019.

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148 Upon motion duly made, the meeting was adjourned at 6:10pm.

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Helen Burton,
Chair


Stephanie Martinez,
Executive Administrative Assistant